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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Preliminary triennial comprehensive policy review of
operational activities of the United Nations system

Note by the Secretariat

1. By resolution 46/219 of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly defined the subjects for the 1992 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system. Reports were requested containing assessments of and recommendations on the reforms initiated by the Assembly in resolution 44/211 of 22 December 1989. Reports were also requested on such issues as the role of operational activities in science and technology and in human development, as well as on comprehensive training strategies. In response, an integrated and comprehensive methodology was developed to cover all elements of Assembly resolution 46/219 in a single report.

2. A central focus of the preparation of the report was to obtain a field perspective on the implementation of Assembly resolution 44/211 and on future requirements. Particular attention was given to obtaining an assessment by recipient countries of the state of current reforms of operational activities and of future needs. The method used involved field missions to 12 countries by four expert missions between 8 February and 11 March 1992. The missions were headed by experienced senior persons and included some agency representatives. On the basis of a common set of questions, detailed discussions were held with government authorities, resident coordinators, representatives of other United Nations organizations, including international financial institutions, and bilateral donors in the countries. The process also involved the analysis of over 100 responses to questionnaires sent to all the United Nations resident coordinators and through them to the other country representatives of United Nations organizations. Over 70 responses to a set

of questions sent to Governments of both developing and developed countries were analysed as well. These responses provided a comprehensive overview of the positions of Governments on the implementation of Assembly resolution 44/211 and on future directions.

3. The organizations of the United Nations system were consulted through a questionnaire, as well as directly, and through discussions within the framework of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. All this information is being condensed and analysed and will form the basis for the elaboration of conclusions and recommendations for consideration by Member States at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

4. In accordance with Assembly resolution 46/219, the assessment carried out so far has focused on the following subjects:

(a) Assistance in the development of national strategies; experience with a national programme framework and collaborative programming; progress towards a programme approach; harmonization and adaptation of programming cycles; programme performance, audit and evaluation. In accordance with paragraph 17 (e) of Assembly resolution 44/211, a special study was undertaken on the question of the integration of multilateral non-emergency food aid with national programmes;

(b) Utilization and strengthening of national capacities, including the requirements for a comprehensive approach to capacity-building that utilized comprehensive training, national execution and other methods;

(c) National execution, with a special focus on the current pace of implementation of this mode of execution and on areas requiring further action;

(d) The resident coordinator system, taking into account the varying conditions under which the system operates, and recent developments with respect to the nomination process and the more effective functioning of the system, including a more coherent field presence of the United Nations system;

(e) Decentralization within the context of recent decisions of intergovernmental bodies, and the requirements for enhancing national involvement at key stages of programmes and projects;

(f) The role of operational activities in science and technology (para. 26 of the resolution);

(g) The role of operational activities in human development (para. 27);

(h) Training support in operational activities (para. 15);

(i) Common premises and shared facilities in developing countries (para. 25);

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(j) Trends in resources (information on which is to be contained in an addendum to the report);

(k) Procurement issues (para. 28 of the resolution).

5. In order to do justice to the subject-matter and the significant amount of information collected, further reflection and analysis are required. It has therefore not been possible for the Secretariat to complete the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities in time for the substantive session of 1992 of the Economic and Social Commission. In addition, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/219 and important developments that have taken place in the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and other forums during the first half of the year need to be taken into account in finalizing the report for consideration by the General Assembly. The transfer of responsibility for the preparation of the report from the former Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation to the new Department of Economic and Social Development has been an additional factor.

6. While a preliminary draft of the report has been prepared, the Secretary-General is of the view that considerable additional work is necessary to finalize it for submission to intergovernmental bodies. In spite of time constraints, every effort will be made to reflect in the report the outcome of the Council's consideration of relevant items on the agenda of its substantive session of 1992, particularly its review of the role of the United Nations system in the 1990s and its discussions on issues relating to the governance and financing of operational activities.
